



Program Focus

Several special project areas were funded throughout the State, which provided unique restoration opportunities. One of these is in the southwest corner of the state bordering the Mississippi River and is located between two National Wildlife Refuges. This site contains endangered species habitat. Another tract located farther north, also adjacent to the Mississippi River, provides some of the most unusual habitat in the state created by the 1927 Mississippi River flood. There are several rare and unique wetland plant communities on this site. Finally, a restoration agreement was funded in the northeast portion of the state to provide hydrology restoration for waterfowl habitat on a new State wildlife management area. This is the only site of this type in northeast Mississippi.



2001 Wetlands Reserve Program

Mississippi Summary

Overview

The floodplain of the Mississippi Delta once comprised a vast and unique wetland ecosystem consisting of bottomland hardwood forests, oxbow lakes, and cypress swamps. These characteristics, along with the region's long growing season and mild winter temperature, produced extremely diverse and species-rich wildlife habitat, including winter feeding grounds for the largest population of migratory waterfowl in North America. However, it is estimated that 78 percent of these bottomland hardwood wetland forests have now been converted. The WRP in Mississippi emphasizes the restoration and protection of this Delta ecoregion, which contains many federally-listed threatened and endangered species.

The WRP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands. Landowners have the option of enrolling eligible lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements and restoration cost-share agreements.

Accomplishments

Since the inception in 1992 of the WRP Pilot Program, there have been 269 easements enrolled in the State of Mississippi, encompassing 103,105 acres. This gives Mississippi the second largest enrollment of WRP acres in the nation. The program is so popular with landowners here that there is a current backlog of applications on over 37,000 acres. Since 1997, reforestation of WRP bottomland hardwood forests has been completed on approximately 77,000 acres by planting bare-root seedlings. Additionally, hydrology restoration enhancement measures have been completed on approximately 15,000 acres. Currently in Mississippi, NRCS, working through partnerships, is restoring an estimated 10,000 acres of wildlife habitat annually.

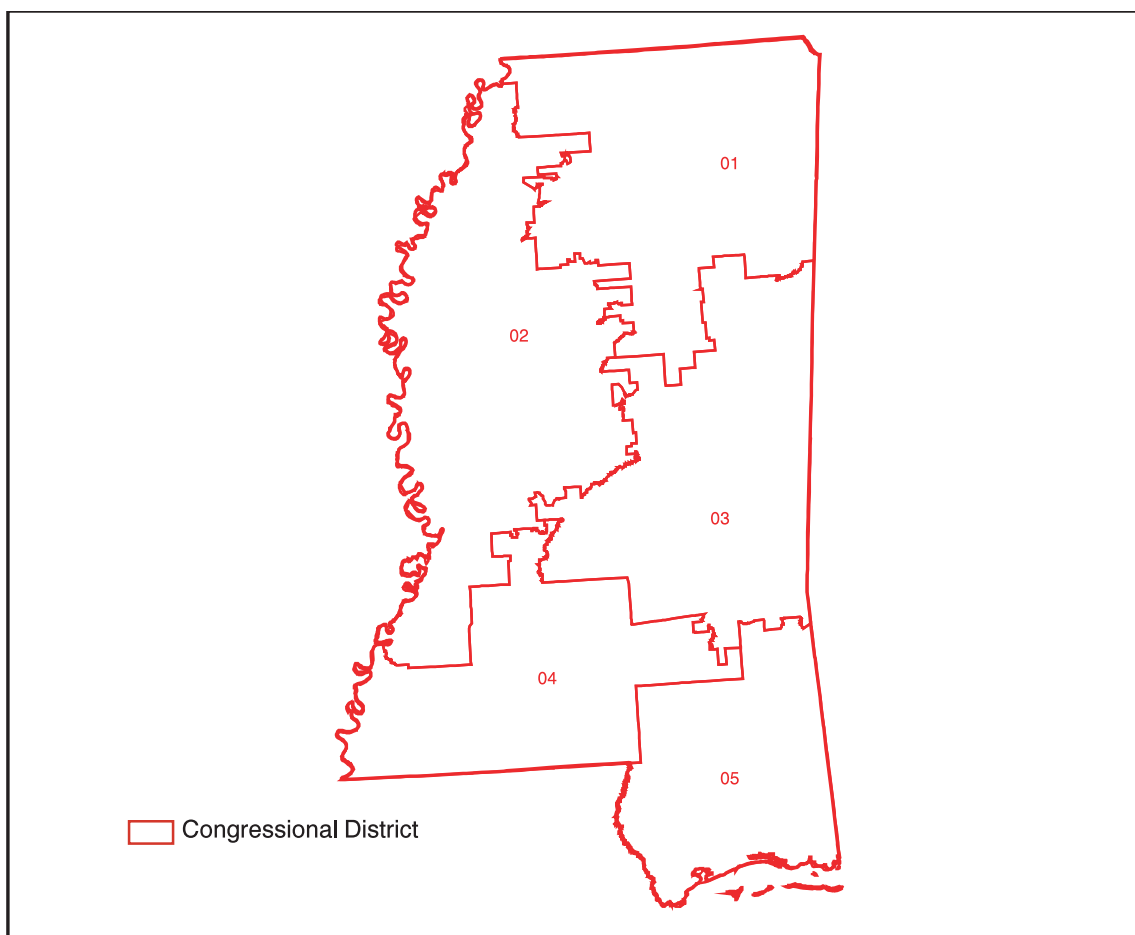
Program Benefits

The Mississippi Delta is one of the most intensively farmed regions in the United States. Several million acres of cotton, rice, soybeans, corn and catfish are grown annually. Croplands enrolled in WRP are planted to bottomland hardwood forests that filter out sediments and nutrients that would otherwise end up in the Mississippi River, eventually making their way to the Gulf of Mexico. Reforestation of WRP bottomland hardwood forest ecosystems is also providing critical habitat for many species of endangered fish and wildlife, including the Louisiana Black Bear. WRP is helping many family farms by providing opportunities for a diversified income through hunting leases, which are very popular in the South. Hard times in the soybean farming enterprise have also meant WRP has provided some farmers with an alternative source of income by enrolling in WRP.

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Mississippi Dollars and Contracts by Congressional District



Mississippi Dollars and Contracts

Congressional Districts	Fiscal Year 2001		Cumulative Total (95-01)	
	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts
District 1	155,000	1	622,200	5
District 2	8,529,187	28	44,758,787	138
District 3	0	0	185,000	4
District 4	1,065,813	3	5,417,813	8
District 5	0	0	0	0
State Totals	9,750,000	32	50,983,800	155

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